(154) (1928)

La Bergère. Cassis. Bde R. France.

Jan 24

My Billy.

You will be surprised (I hear that we are actually here, installed, eating off a table, sitting on chairs, sleeping in beds. with knives & forks. sheets. towels. crockery. all the absolute necessaries of life & some of the luxuries. How it has happened I cant quite understand when I look at what was a tumble down shell of a house last year & is now a very gay. cheerful pretty little cottage. with bathroom & all & somehow come into our possession. The oddest part of it is perhaps

and love to Aunt Jean
and to Pinker and to Clinker
and to Uncle Leonard.

that the Keeds were also
unknown a year ago & we
were not. not with them at any moment of the day
or night. They are very tactful however & extremely
helpful. They have sent us lots of things & begin
with. We arrived on a lovely day with hot sun
& blue sky after quite an easy journey with only one
very tiresome mishap. which was that we lost or
had stolen all the clothes I had brought in Paris
& my self & Angelica. How it happened I don't know
but I fear they are some which is very annoying
I daresay you think its a wonder we set back

at all & so do I. But we did get our chairs & blankets. The house is very charming. Duncan's studio is over most of it & quite large. Mine is added on to one side & is very big but has a good light. Then there is a very nice little dining room, a good bedroom for Angelica. a kitchen with an enormous cupboard & a small bedroom for Grace. Added on at the other side is a bath room & WC. They say the bath doesn't work as well as it should but we can get very hot baths. It's all extremely compact & well arranged. There's a wide terrace outside & a tall glass screen to keep out the wind. We are going to grow vines up the pillars & over the top of the terrace so as to make a good shelter but I think already it is quite sheltered from the mistral. Since we have been here however it has been quite still & today might have been an English summer day.

Aunt Daisy has been on the stairs & had the asked Grace. But she is now gone to Rome - she has the vices no doubt. Today a friend suddenly appeared out of the blue which she had managed to get from someone & which will keep Angelica happy. We haven't got at the car yet. But I have today got all necessary documents & perhaps we shall get it tomorrow - I have seen no one much except Wyndham Tryon who seems rather cracked as usual. Duncan is a little more in touch with the world but I think even much more out of the way here than at the Cassis

154 ii

At any rate so far as one but Aunt Daisy has ventured near us.

I had a letter today from Clive from Munich very full of the comparative charms of the fair ladies whom he considers maligned. & of his carryings on with one of them. He seemed (he says) Munich very much & gave a charming account of Quentins family who all sound fairly young & very nice. The Barnim is half French & all talk French. I hope he'll soon settle down with them. I almost think Clive may put his head above his conquests in love however - he seems unable to help parading them. Perhaps the sudden abrupt ending to the affair with Mary has rather rather unbalanced him in that way. Have you heard anything of her? I feel rather guilty for never having had anything more to do with her but I seemed (he continues) to be nothing I could say.

Did you hear that I went away leaving Ka no latch keys - I had to send them from Dover & hope she'll have got them. What else I may have forgotten I don't know - no doubt things will crop up. I hope for news of all the Bloomsbury portions - Ka, Helen, Barbara etc. I hope all is well descend on you. also Ottoline, & that I shall have them at second hand.

I remember writing to you last year from that rather cramped little sitting room at the Villa Corsica.

Now I am sitting in my own rocking chair over
a wood fire, which smokes to be sure - but which
I hope they will cure soon - & though it still
all rather a muddle the things have the
charm of being my own & are of my
own choice & arrangement. When you come
I hope to have all in order, curtains made
& such things as fire irons bought. Nothing
in the shape of a tool can be bought in Cassis
but we can sometimes get lent a hammer
or a tin opener. However I shall soon
master in & Marseilles & get all such details
On the whole we are far better off than we
were for years at Charleston & there have
been remarkably few of the horrors generally
waiting for one in a new house - I
even hope to keep in pain up in a day
or two.

Please write & don't forget your
familiars. I may have more gossip &
fish for next time - now I have written
but domestic news - Sir my love & Leonard.
I will send the Living Poets in a day
or two Yours VW

T. PARSONS 3.2.73

(155) (1928)

La Bergère
Cassis

Feb. 2

My Billy.

I expect you & I are in telepathic touch with each other as I have often thought. I had felt sure you had a headache before your letter came. Also the night before I had a long & complicated dream about Lytton & Roger S. What have you been doing to get a headache? Why aren't you sitting in the sun here? Not that it would have been possible today with a bad mistral blowing, but yesterday you might have. It would be more sensible than having Ka etc. to tea - in fact mes life here is the only sensible life one leads. I find it a great relief & joy in the country without a garden. It seems to give me many more moments of leisure & I see that I am really of a very lazy disposition & enjoy resting so much & pottering about looking about me with no particular engagement ahead. I think it's a pity you don't come & do it too instead of considering questions of Carlyright & American ladies. Our only excitement here has been the arrival of our case of books, lamps & curtains. We now have a most peculiar library. a great many Everyman volumes, some curious works presented by Frankie, some detective stories from Sumbo & a great many children's books. We have Aladdin lamps too which will

be a comfort & we shall soon I hope have curtains. Gradually we are getting comfortable & in order. I see Leonard's success at Brighton with be held over our heads - but our failures were more clearly traceable due to the car, which has again developed the same troubles, which I need not tell you about as pointly you would grasp them. We have had in the mechanic here who is thought to be very good but he didn't cure it - finally today as we were completely stuck near the Reeds' house a stranger appeared called Knox who turned out to be a racing motorist who came to the rescue & says he has cured the disease. I only hope he has.

We are now leading more or less regular lives - Angelica goes off to school in her dressing at 9 o'clock with Grace. Elsie comes for the morning & cooks lunch & does our shopping. Duncan & I paint each in our own studio or even out of doors. We see no one but occasional glimpses of the Reeds. Duncan spent a day in bed with a chill, but is all right again. Aunt Daisy is at Arbroath, but appears for week ends in Cassis. which doesn't much matter. I see no reason why we should ever see anyone else. It will be very dull for you as you'll get no gossip, but to me it seems perfect. Perhaps however a few additions will crop up - Wyndham

(155ii)

for instance is coming to lunch on Sunday & I see Mrs Crothers with whom to be entertained one day but such events will stand out in our lives while in yours they would be a mere flea-bite. I was fascinated by your account of Snows - I must really try & marry her to Bridley. Smith when I get back - I told you that play didn't I? - She wrote & told me she had seen you - & was as usual charmed & slightly frightened which is the highest tribute to your genius. I shall be very much interested to hear what happens with Helen. Roger wrote to me on his way to Portsmouth's funeral: & told me about his visit to Tommy. He said little or nothing about Helen - I daresay she'll evaporate completely out of Bloomsbury without me there to support her. If you are in touch with Vita as of course you are you might give her my love - I had thought of writing (her about Chilver but perhaps this wouldn't be a tactful moment to do so - I'm very sorry she's had such a bad time. It's difficult for me to understand a passion for Knole - I should be so thankful to get rid of it - but I suppose people do feel such things.

He has a letter from Quentin today. He seems very happy & is evidently in luck with his family whom he thinks charming & says - There's an Oxford man called Baird there, an admirer of yours.

Her learnings d[illegible] together enjoying himself.
I suppose he'll return quite grown up. Julian also
writes & says that he can't think & talk of nuts
but the French revolution & bores everyone stiff
with it. But he seems fairly contented too in
his own way.

Don't you think a change of scene would be
good for you & that you couldn't do better
than come here where your sister & niece
would give you every attention? & you should
have a warm sitting room with sun & fire
all day & you could wander about in the
fields & woods & ride a donkey if you
liked? I'm sure Jean would give you a
room & I would give you all due & hot
baths into the bargain. Leonard of course
wouldn't come, or else I'm sure he could have
a room too. You had really better
consider this. It is a serious proposition.

Our clothes are lost I am afraid. I bet
it dreadful - all my new trousseaux.
Its very mysterious too, as they vanished somehow
between the cab & the train in Paris I
think. My love & your husband who might
send me a line to say how you are. You are
excused from writing if you're unable & from
any cause but want of remembrance of us

Yours V B

(156) (1928)

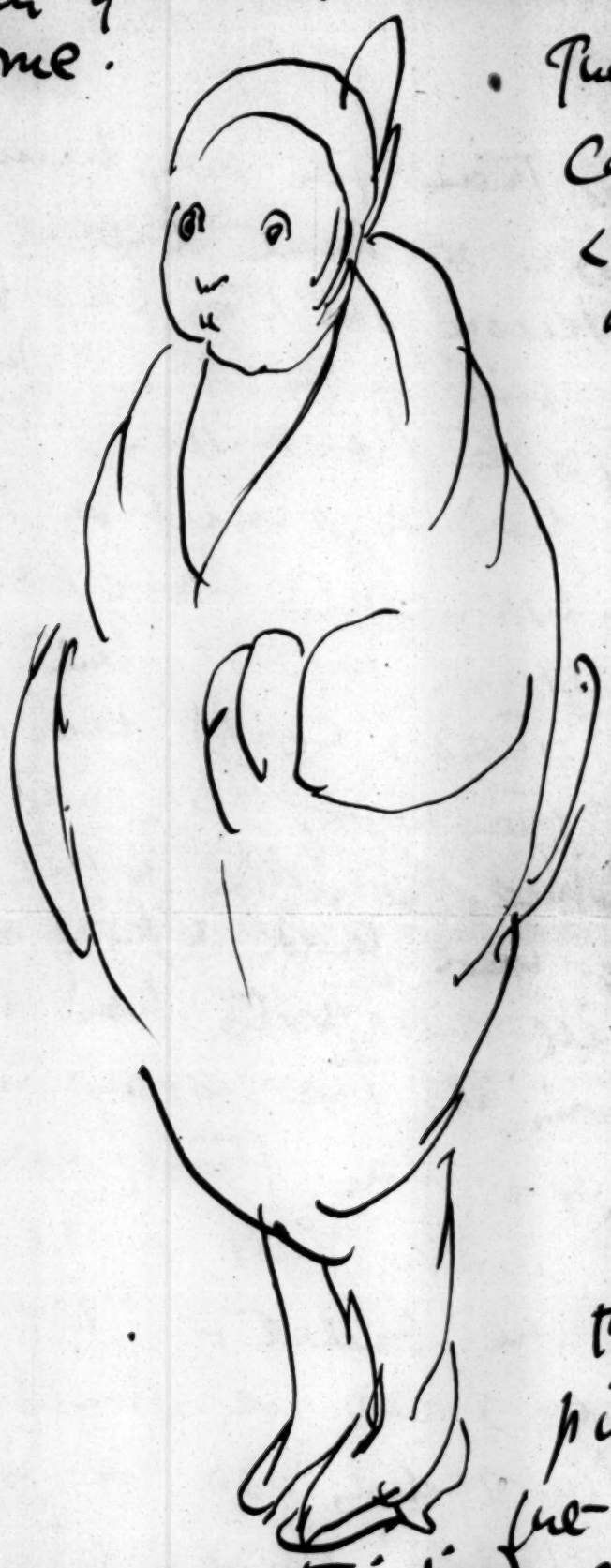
La Berjère
Cassis

Feb. 20

My Baby.

As none knows better than you my human news makes interesting letters. so don't expect much from me. Since Mr Knox put the car in order we have done little but use it. On Saturday we intended to go to Marseilles. but were thwarted by finding we had a puncture just as we were going out - we could have remedied that by putting on the spare wheel but no efforts of Duncans or Col. Reads could undo the nut which fastened it to the car. We had to blow up the punctured wheel & drive to the Garage in the town where we were made (feel rather foolish by finding. That all our efforts had been squandered on trying to turn it the wrong way. Not quite so foolish as you with steel knuckles for an Leonard with adjust screws all right to turn the same way & this we didn't. By the time we got all this done we saw we should be too late for the bank at Marseilles. so we went to Aix instead. which is a large sleepy town with rows of open horse drawn cabs & some rather lovely buildings. where we saw pictures by Cezes & others & were very happy in the sun. The drive I will not describe so don't be afraid, lovely as it was with a barking sun & crimson earth. Duncan drove with great skill most of both ways.

yesterday morning we had to rise early & have breakfast to catch the early train to Marseilles where we & her friend Miss Whiteside. who looks more like the White Rabbit than you can conceive. were going to catch the boat to Rome.



They nearly missed the train at Cassis because Miss W. ran backwards & forwards in a fright thinking at the last minute that she might & say good-bye to me. However they were just in & that was our last glimpse of human society for the present. I don't count the reds. who are to lunch with us tomorrow at a sort of house warming luncheon. when we are to plant vines against the pillars of our terrace. Today we actually did go to Marseilles. Duncan drove there, managing the hills & hairpin bends with great competence. But when we got into the town he became terrified of the policeman's eye, nearly ran into a lamp post & made me take the wheel. I considered I did very well. At the moment we found ourselves in a narrow passage with no visible exit & I had to back between large heaps of stones on one side & a cart standing on the other to get out of it. We

held up a good sized crowd for some time while I make my way out & received a great deal of good advice from experts who crowded round - but still we did get out without any harm done in the end. Marseilles is said to be far worse than Paris to drive in which I think is true. No one observes any rules, there are tram lines every where, large horse drawn lorries walk slowly down the middle of every street. & thousands of people on foot rush in & out & are always off the pavement. It seems to me a wonder we managed at all, but we got back safe laden with a table & a looking glass & yards of stuff for curtains. There are fascinating shops to be explored only one never has enough time.

Gun with have to come also & the pottery at Antagne where I intend to spend some happy hours buying masses of things for Charleston. One can get really very nice practical things, plates & cups & jugs - veh. I have got on to quite impersonal subjects you see which can't be helped. I am of course hoping to know more of your dealings with Helen Rafer writes only about his excursions into the great world. Clive doesn't write at all. Does he see Mary? I sometimes think she may now make a final desperate effort to reclaim him & it may be successful. No doubt guilt be laid in Gt Ormond St the blame, at least I hope you will be so that I may get the benefit. Were you in at Mrs Asquith's death? I wish you'd send me your notes on Meredith & Hardy which otherwise I shant see.

I may have mine
bring Judith here. y
J. has quite recovere
mite I don't know wh
come, in March.
town if I can - I hop
Cas that she'll be very
means to stay a fortnig
I shall get Jean's room
I believe she'd let
for 15/- a night a
you could keep the
here - in our garage
meals here & the din
its absurd to stay only
What is happening to Angus? Has he anyth
in prospect? He hasn't when he last wrote -
I don't know when (if ever) he means to come here.
but I have written to ask him - Nor
Roger. Angelica is very happy: much older & easier
than last year & altogether more at ease. I think if
Judith does come she'll be perfectly contented. She has
rather an acute religious mania now & says she'd like
to spend a week or more alone with a male missionary.
I don't see how it's to be managed. I can't satisfy
her religious cravings I'm afraid though I think she
might to have a shot of it really. I suppose you
must be using to (Cambridge this term) & seeing Julian -
Quentin sounds very happy. Do ask your husband to
write to me - it's very important to hear from you both
so that I can draw my own conclusions. It's not fair to expect equally
interesting letters from me. I can only do my best
your love

I hear from Ellie that
come. but Barbara deplo
Nan also threatens to
can get her rooms in the
she'll have her own
dependant. She says the
girls miss her -
for you shall I?
with bath & breakfast
which isn't dear -
umbrella somewhere up
haps - & have all other
room to sit in - But
week - if Raffy is -

(157) (1928)

La Bergère
Cassis

Feb 24

My Billy.

How wicked of you to get ill. I hope you are ill on your own account & not on account of it. At any rate you are not being cooked after by Aunt Daisy which is a comfort. I have more faith in Leonard's powers as a nurse & I daresay his bulletins would be less negative than Angus'. If you were in train charge I daresay I should have to take the next train & the rescue. You want to be surprised to hear that the night before getting your letter my dreams were full of you & Jack Hutch. I hope you didn't carry on in life as you did in my bed. I am glad you managed to see Ka. What a gentle description for sick household. Really it makes my flesh creep. I hope the smell won't linger. It must be interesting to see how they manage to impress themselves on their surroundings. Ka raves about the curtains in her letters to me!

Clive writes very cheerfully & seems to enjoy life thoroughly. So I suppose Mary is out of his mind. He has asked me to ask Boris here - I don't suppose he'll come. But I have had to ask her - Duncan says I am the fly that draws the nitment, but I deny it. He's just as bad. In either case unfortunately the fact remains - the nitment comes. That is to say that on

Friday next we expect Barbara & Judith. I have had
a most alarming letter from Barbara. describing endless
household worries & saying that she is so exhausted that
a week at sea will hardly be enough to restore her
& she feels she will never want to leave Cassis
again! I shall take drastic steps if some kind after
3 days. Moreover. A week is the outside limit
we allow her. after which both Duncan & I are
prepared to fly ourselves if she doesn't. It's rather
an appalling prospect isn't it? all the result of my
maternal instinct you'll say & serve you right.
My maternal instinct however will not account for the
appearance of Nan in the middle of March. She is
going to be kept in the town & with here own car
so I hope shall be fairly independant. But I am
rather nervous. Clive & I suppose Boto come on the
20th Julian I don't know when. not Roger.
you come I hope at the beginning of April. If it's
possible I shall get Jean to put you up. but Clive
says we must have 3 rooms. You will have
the car. so it wouldn't matter so much if you
weren't at Fontcreuse, but please tell me in good
time what you'd like. If I can't get rooms there
shall I try elsewhere in the neighbourhood, or at
the Condition? You must consult with Clive as
he talked of going for a bird with Boto. If that
coincided with your visit, or if she were free by
the time you came, you could probably have rooms
at the Reeds. But please let me know my rooms

(157 ii)

are hard to get in Cassis. I hope very much all these
will have gone by the time you come & that we can
walk in the sun together - Don't pretend to think
I have called you the nickname - it would not
take me in for a moment.

I have never had the letter from Coldfax you speak of.
I suppose Ka has kept it. Today to our great surprise
Sring to the station to take Duncan to Marseilles. We were
given a package which turned out to be our lost Cl. Shaw
I don't know what had happened. but as they seem to
have come from the P.L.M. I suppose they must have been
taken by mistake by someone else in the train. The
worst of it is that my me & only dress has been
stolen. all else is here. I am getting so dirty &
shabby I shall have to go to Marseilles & get another
However its a blessing to have the other things.

I am writing to you simply because you pretend
to want consolation for your disease - not because
I have anything to say as I wrote you a long
letter only a few days ago. Duncan has gone
to Marseilles partly to see Bréal & partly to see
Minnie Markham. Who she is I can't tell you,
except that she has been in love with Mr Grant
for the last 40 years & lives at Marseilles to
economise & is very strict & proper. I am therefore
seen more alone than usual. but we now count
our days I believe, feeling the approach of Barbara
daily nearer - What about Angus? Does he
intend to come here too? Not I hope at the same
time that you do. I feel sure he'll be at a loose
end for some months. What is to be done?

Who else have I had letters from? No one except Faith. She also sent me an account of domestic troubles. One child has measles & she spent a page wondering whether she would prefer the other to get it or not. I suppose we're all alike however. Did I write just such letters to you when they were of a measable age - do I still? I could easily do so about Angelica & should if you didn't do it for me. Ka no doubt thinks Mark the pick of the lot & that he'll have out shine all mine. I used to restrain myself by force, having the Boo Hags always in my mind as a warning. I think they were perhaps worse even than Bayerals.

Please ask Leonard to send me a line to say how you are - Do you ever go to Rodmell in your Singer? Is England tolerable now?

The frogs are beginning here. I cannot believe there is anything to be said for the mortem chemicals.

Your VW

Its quite true about the Renault clutch - I quoted literally from the Renault book - no doubt that's why its so far more vigorous than a Singer hermaphrodite.

158

La Bergère
Cassis.

1928

March 5

My Billy.

Barbara has gone having very nearly killed me in more ways than one - but I thank God she has gone. I could write to you while she was here - (nor did I owe you a letter) Really it has been rather appalling & we did the Derby only two thoroughly. We drove her to Toulon. to Aubagne. to La Ciotat. to the Calanques. & finally this morning to the station which was the last straw, as you shall hear by way of warning. I drove her & Duncan who wanted to go to Marseilles for the day & we caught a train at 8.20 AM. I left them at the station & returned alone. driving slowly along, knowing that I should presently meet the large & lumbering bus climbing the hill. I saw it coming round a corner taking up most of the road & swerved slightly to the right to give it room when I felt the car skid - first down into the wide & fairly steep ditch on the right of the road. then violently round to the left & straight into the bus. Luckily we were both going very slowly - it was climbing the hill & I stop slowly down by way of caution. Otherwise it would have been a complete smash. As it was no one was hurt, but the car I fear is very badly damaged. The bus wasn't hurt at all. All the passengers got out & I got out & could see with much wonder beyond a damaged wing. but when I got in again I found I could not steer. The car had skidded so much that it had turned almost completely round. I managed to get it to one side of the road & there had to leave it. I then ran back to the station about ¼ of a mile off where I found Duncan & B- still

waiting for the train & Duncan came back with me. We have put the car into the hands of M. Sourday, the great standby. & as I'm insured I hope to get the money. But I fear it will take a long time to repair. I give you this long account to show you how dangerous these roads are & how careful you must be when you drive in France (also get insured abroad - it costs nothing for the first 3 months). Not that I could have been much more careful, but there are nearly always these ditches beside the roads. It had rained hard this morning & the ground where it began to slope to the ditch although it looked all right was really simply soft & slippery mud. I think it hardly safe to drive at all when the roads are wet They don't look skiddy, as they're apparently sandy, but they are really very bad & all cars skid on them It was lucky I went into the bus & not further into the ditch I think, as might easily have happened as in that case the car would probably have fallen over on to its side against a wall & I could hardly have helped being hurt But it wasn't pleasant going into the bus.

We did think of driving to meet you at Beaucaire near Tarascon, but now I don't know when we shall get the car again. I hope to hear tomorrow how much it's damaged. Please don't tell Mrs Grant or anyone else who might tell her anything much, as she'd be terrified if she thought Duncan ran risks - though in fact this was the hand of God (by way of Barbara) & no fault

I don't know what to do about your rooms, but as Boto is not coming I should think you can have rooms at Fontfroide - Clive now says he's coming on Sunday the 25th nothing more than a companion. He wrote me

(158 ii)

a most extraordinary letter, simply that I a lady of fashion letting me know he spent his day hurrying from the beauty specialist to the dancing master, lunch, dinner & supper parties. It sounded rather too hectic & unnatural I thought. I agree with you he seems to be in an odd way sexually. Do you know what is happening about his lady? I can't say I think life in Bloomsbury as he describes it seems alluring. Perhaps there are other sides to it. I wish I could persuade you to settle here. If you did I certainly should. I see that I shall be perpetually harried by the Bedford estate in Gordon Sq. & now Ld. Sage wants us to leave Charleston. We can be made to do for another 4 years. & by that time perhaps we will have found someone to take the farm without a house which seems to be his present difficulty. but I fear he may turn us out then. Altogether life in England seems very complicated & bristling & I can't think why you cling to it. Also its very expensive & I seem to be spending far more than I've ever done as usual in keeping 3 households going. Ka says they want to leave at the beginning of April. which will be less than 3 months - I suppose you can't find me another tenant for another month or so? You're very good at it.

What will happen to Angus I wonder. It is difficult not to feel responsible for so inept a creature but there's goodness one isn't really. However with your brisk young woman installed I don't see why you should stay here a week. Why don't you get Vita to come out & stay on with you? if Leonard really can't stay. I'm sure this climate would be good for your brains.

They sound to me very feeble & in need of a change -
I rather dread Nan I admit. but she'll be in the
town & not painting all day I hope. Julian arrives
at the same time. Still after Barbara Nan will
be so intelligent & amusing & full of character that
I daresay she will be delightful to have her. Poor B.
thought it necessary to read Proust in the evening
One evening I was cruel enough to keep her &
read undisturbed for more than 5 minutes - but
generally I couldn't help throwing her a bone & then
regretting it. She says Nick is terrified of me but not of
you - while with her it is the other way - I think you
come off best. She offered to come here next year &
nurse minding all the family too. Luckily we could take
it as a joke but I suddenly realized she was quite
capable of it. I told her [illegible] maternal instinct & that
she looked uneasy [illegible]. Lord how Cocks I
get. Duncan says I look [illegible] like
Father. I think I may have [illegible] did no good. For
B is not really so sensitive [illegible] as poor old C.B.
Now that equally dense & insensitive child is here
& will drive me wild. But [illegible] maternal instinct
makes me endure her.

Lemmy has given me [illegible] as a correspondent.
Why? I should very much like to give an order for
printed note paper with the address going straight across
La Bergère. Cassis. Bouches du Rhône. France. "
in your letters.

I wish get rooms for you somewhere, up here if possible.
But do arrange to stay longer

Love VB

T. PARSONS 3-2-73